

**Mad River Valley Planning District
Steering Committee
October 20, 2016**

Present were:

Fayston: Jared Cadwell, Selectboard
Waitsfield: Kari Dolan, Selectboard; Steve Shea, Planning Commission
Warren: Bob Ackland, Selectboard; Jim Sanford, Planning Commission
CVRPC: Bonnie Waninger
Sugarbush: Margo Wade
MRV Chamber of Commerce: Peter MacLaren
MRVPD: Joshua Schwartz; Kristine Keeney
Guests: attendees for the MRV Moves Presentation

The meeting opened at 6:40pm. Bob Ackland, Chair, brought the meeting to order.

- I. Accept Meeting Minutes of 7/21/16 Steering Committee Meeting:** Peter MacLaren provided the motion, and it was seconded by Steve Shea

- II. Executive Director's Highlights of Staff Report:** J. Schwartz provided the Committee updates on several areas including economic development, flood resilience/water quality, transportation, and housing. The update was quite short in order to ensure there was ample time for the MRV Moves final plan presentation.

Economic Development

Progress on Vermont Downtown Action Team (V-DAT)/CDBG-DR2 Implementation Grants:

- The Warren Main Street Improvement Project has a temporary demonstration and block party planned for 11/5. The advisory committee is working on getting the word out about the event and is working closely with the Warren Store to offer activities that will draw people to Main Street for the event. Public feedback will be collected that will help inform the next design phase. The advisory committee and members of the Warren Road crew and Fire Department met at the 10/24 Planning Commission to plan logistics for the event.
- The Waitsfield Pocket/Lovett Park Project is at the 90% design stage and will be submitted to the DRB the week of 10/24/16.
- The September MRV Dashboard was printed in the 10/13 edition of the Valley Reporter.
 - There have been challenges related to collecting data from The Bridges due to staffing changes.
 - The MRVPD has discussed the idea of the Chamber becoming more involved in the development of the Dashboard.

Flood Resilience/Water Quality

Ridge 2 River (R2R) and the MRVPD is working together to organize a community forum to talk about the work that has been done since Hurricane Irene and is going to serve as a kick-off for the Ridge 2 River work on stormwater at the Big Picture Theater. The date has been changed to December 7th, 2016.

Transportation

Sugarbush Access Road Path Scoping Study:

- Following a landowner and second public meeting the study is moving into the final stages that identify a preferred alignment for the Access Road Path for Inferno Road. Kristine provided input on the MRVPD's preferred alignment and will be providing comment on the draft study and figures.
- The Advisory Committee will be meeting to go over the final draft of the study on 12/21/16.

Waitsfield West Sidewalk Project:

- Kristine created count forms and counted crossing pedestrians on Route 100 at the Valley Players Theater and recruited June Anderson to count pedestrians using the Bridge Street crosswalk and the proposed crosswalk at the Village Grocery.

- Both counts achieved the VTrans warrant requirements of 20 pedestrians crossing in 1 hour (children and elderly count as two people).
- Bicycles were also counted on Route 100 and if they were or were not wearing a helmet.

Route 100 (Waitsfield) Bike Lanes:

- Kristine worked with VTrans representatives to ensure the bike lanes along Rt. 100 were striped correctly this season.
- She also worked with VTrans to get the pedestrian sign at Old County Road and Route 100 reinstalled after it was knocked down.

Housing

Kristine is focusing a lot of time and effort on updating the 2006 Housing Study. The MRVHC has been providing guidance on the past municipal strategies and Kristine is meeting with the Planning Commissions to identify possible sites for housing. Kristine has been designing and will be disseminating a housing survey for recent housing seekers and businesses. The goal is to present the updated Housing Study at the Valley Leadership Meeting in mid-November.

III. Old Business

The discussion turned to old business of finalizing the “Golden Circle Exercise” to establish the why, how, and what of the MRVPD. It will help guide the PD’s efforts going forward.

- Why: We believe in the Mad River Valley, it’s community, beauty, and its connectedness, striving to protect its vibrancy and innovative nature while honoring its past.
- How: Carol Chamberlain was not present but expressed her desire to Bob Ackland prior to the meeting that she wanted to change “sustainably use” the Valley’s natural resources to “protect.” Kari suggested other terms including caretaking, working landscape, but thought that we should think more broadly beyond protectionism and that sustainably use captures that sentiment. Others felt that the existing wording implied protection. The Committee settled on “promote stewardship and sustainable use...”
- There was no discussion of any changes to the “what” section.

Jerad Cadwell motioned to approve the document, Peter MacLaren seconded the motion.

IV. New Business

MRV Moves Active Transportation Plan Final Presentation

- Joshua started off the presentation highlighting the fact that this was the first time that he is aware of that the 5 towns in the watershed (Waitsfield, Warren, Fayston, Moretown, and Granville) worked together on a project. He emphasized that the plan establishes a watershed wide long-range and cohesive vision for active transportation and builds on decades of work of the municipality and non-profit organizations.
- What does active transportation mean in the MRV?
 - Drew Pollak-Bruce, SE Group, took over the presentation and explained that active transportation looks different in the Mad River Valley than it does in other places like Burlington because you cannot separate recreation and transportation here. He explained that active transportation means human power and includes biking, walking, roller skates, and wheelchairs.
- Community Engagement
 - Drew explained that there was an extensive community engagement process that was conducted as part of this plan. The Advisory Committee was made up an array of stakeholders from the community and many non-profit organizations.
 - Several community events were held including Sugarbush Community Day, Waitsfield farmer’s markets, Vision & Vitality meetings, public workshops, National Trails Day Event that included walking and biking audits and ice cream.
 - The MRV Moves website provided the public access to project documents and a way to collect feedback. It will be available for a year for the MRVPD to use going forward.
 - A survey was conducted that had 350 responses from locals, second home owners, and visitors. Some of the major findings are below:
 - 78% of visitors reported that trails were an important part of their decision to come to the Valley, 34% said it was the deciding factor

- Respondents reported that 61% drive to work. However, if people are already going to a trailhead to walk/run/bike they're more likely to use active transportation to get there.
 - Respondents were asked about perception of walkability and bikeability of the Valley
 - Across the board people were concerned about safety
 - People were generally more concerned about biking than walking on roads
 - When asked how can we improve conditions for bike and walking? People responded by ranking the following items:
 - Add trails, bikeways or sidewalks to close critical gaps
 - Education
 - Improve safety
 - Encouragement efforts
 - The critical gap that was identified was along the Valley Floor
 - Route 100
 - Mad River Path
 - Moretown to Waitsfield
 - From Warren to Waitsfield
 - Drew went on to explain safety and active transportation usage in terms of the four different types of transportation cyclists. And that in order to encourage more people to bike the best strategy is to build infrastructure that attracts the "Interested, but Concerned" group because they are the largest segment of the population.
- Mapping
 - Various maps of the watershed and village centers were created in order to identify important connections. The analysis took into account town boundaries, water bodies and wetlands, slope, wildlife habitat, existing road network (crashes, speeds), existing active transportation network, and nodes of interest (village centers, schools, trailheads, and recreation areas).
- Recommendations
 - Connections to build out the active transportation network and improve access to the nodes of interested were categorized into four groups:
 - Major off-road
 - Minor off-road
 - Major on-road
 - Minor on-road
 - Village Centers
 - Streetscape improvements
 - Complete street design principles
 - Active transportation tourism
 - Explore the local control of state highways
 - Education and outreach to all users
 - Visibility/designation of an active transportation network (wayfinding, signage)
- Implementation
 - Grants, volunteer labor
 - Regional coordination/organizational capacity
 - One organization should be the leader of this effort. Case studies suggest one of the following arrangements:
 - MOU between organizations
 - Governmental/quasi-governmental organization
 - Non-profit responsibility
- Economic Impact Analysis
 - Drew explained the difference between doing fiscal impact and an economic impact analysis. A fiscal impact analysis looks at the amount of money it cost the town to build a facility and if users are charged \$0, then it looks like a loss. Instead an economic impact analysis was done that looks at the amount of

money it cost the town to build a facility and users are charged \$0, but it considers the fact that they stopped at local businesses or stayed in a hotel. It looks at the bottom line for the community.

- The analysis utilized a tool called MPLAN3 model, developed by the forest service to estimate economic impact, it take into account user spending profiles, trail counts, and determines direct and indirect spending into the local economy.
- The economic impact analysis looked at three trail segments:
 - Blueberry Lake: 35k annual visits, \$1.8 million in total sales, 22 local jobs supported
 - Revolution: 39k annual visits, \$1 million total sales, 13 local jobs supported
 - Waitsfield Village Path: 24k annual visits, \$640,000 in total sales, 8 local jobs supported
- Question and Answer Session
 - Margo Wade: is the MPLAN3 a common model that's used for economic impact analysis
 - Money generation model (MGM) and MPLAN3 are the two options for this type of modeling?
 - MPLAN3 is considered to be more accurate because it tracks what local businesses are operating here and how money spent impacts the local community.
 - Kari Dolan: does the plan recommend expanding certain recreation hubs?
 - The plan does suggest being more outward facing about the location of trails and actively branding active transportation- especially across lodging establishments
 - Jim Sanford: private property owners are a big barrier to implementing some of the recommendations, especially a Valley Floor path.
 - It's important to look at options to use both public and private land and use on-road connection if you need to in the interim. Also the plan can help to have those conversations with landowners.
 - Other suggestions included a pool of money for easement acquisitions and leveraging relationships from the MRR, MRPA, and VLT that already deal with landowners in the Valley on a regular basis.
 - Kevin Russell suggested working with snowmobile clubs because they have experience in working with private owners. He also suggested working with private owners to make better connections to the sidewalk.
 - There will also be more pressure to complete a trail once more sections are done and highlight successful stories from other landowners.
 - Betsy Jondro (Mad River Path): said that VMBA is starting to accept 10-year easements, but MRPA has been working on a permanent basis. Should MRPA consider accepting shorter easement terms in exchange for additional access for the path or is it not worth the investment if it might be revoked in 10 years?
 - It was suggested to focus on keeping access by telling people what the conditions are up front for trail use (dogs, types of users, etc.).
 - Laura Brines (Mad River Path): asked how do we move forward to implement this plan?
 - It was suggested to meet with stakeholders and talk about the best way to work together
 - Karolynn Schipa: said that it's not easy to see where there is bike parking and suggested that the Valley needs more bike racks at businesses.
 - Liza Walker (Vermont Land Trust): talked about the opportunity for the Town of Waitsfield to purchase property to increase access to the Scrag Municipal Forest because currently people don't use it much and the trails aren't being improved because it's hard to access.
 - Kari Dolan: asked if there was data from other places to understand the opportunity that it's in front of us and the use and economic impact of their trails?
 - Drew pointed out that there is data and examples available but none of them would be a perfect fit for the Valley.

Community Vitality Project

- The meetings have been moved to Sugarbush until the acoustic issue with the Waitsfield Town Hall is resolved because it's difficult for people to hear that call in.
- Committee plans to present a story format of community vitality at the Valley Leadership meeting on 11/16
 - Actors to act out what the worst case or best case scenario is if we do or don't act
 - It will be based on input from people on the committee on what they think a vital community looks like
 - After the 11/16 meeting the committee will put an action plan together

MRVPD FY18 Work Plan

Joshua then highlighted the fact that the Planning District's capacity has been increased by 33% by adding a second staff position, however, the proposed work plan is an additional 33% more than what we can do with current staffing. The discussion turned to items that could be taken off the work plan.

- The committee recognized that the Ridge 2 River work has been taking a substantial amount of times with the number of meetings. Jerad asked Bonnie (CVRPC) if this work could be additionally supported at the regional level. Bonnie suggested that it might be an option that would need to be discussed further. Kari expressed concern also about state regulations coming from the state about municipal roads and that's not an area of focus at the moment.
- Mad River Valley energy planning was discussed as there will be guidelines available as of 11/1/16 from the Public Services Board for local energy planning in order to gain standing with the Board. Bonnie said that a letter will soon be sent to all of the selectboards in the region offering grant money to do the planning work and asking for interest in doing so. She also said she's unsure if there will be funding available next year because it might depend on the new governor. The plan would address transportation, land use, and energy generation.
- Joshua suggested keeping housing on the work plan in order to finish the 2016 Housing Study and work on implementation. Steve Shea said that he thinks in order to accomplish something the towns will need to work together to do something collectively.
- Joshua also suggested keeping a focus on transportation because the PD is getting more involved with implementation. Also we might want to focus on implementation of some pieces of the MRV Moves Plan. Steve thought maybe transportation should not be the focus because he doesn't think much can be accomplished here. Josh suggested that maybe the PD does not work on a Transportation Plan, but implementing projects instead.
 - The conversation turned to the future of the PD working on project implementation. Kari thought it is a real value to the towns and Jim said he agrees because it wouldn't be a plan sitting on a shelf.
- Recreation was an important topic because of the Recreation Districts effort to secure fields in the Valley. Josh asked the committee if they thought supporting a Recreation Plan was important? Steve Shea thought the Planning District should discuss the issue of the recreational fields before any decision is made at the town level.
- Kari wanted to wrap up the meeting by talking about what areas might make sense to cut. She suggested Ridge 2 River work, energy planning, and that there would be less time spent on VDAT next year after the projects are built. Steve Shea expressed his desire to keep Irasville Placemaking in the work plan.
 - Bonnie suggested looking at the effort versus reward of each work plan item to help decide which to cut.

MRVPD FY18 Budget

Bob Ackland said that he would be recommending that the funding stay flat for the MRVPD in the next budget year at the 11/16 Leadership Meeting. He recognizes that there was an effort to find another funding source but that has not been figured out at this time. Joshua said it is important to keep in mind that the PD has had a new staff person in place for four months.

It was decided that the MRVPD Steering Committee would meet on 11/10 ahead of the Leadership Meeting to finalize the work plan. Joshua agreed to send the committee a quadrant dot diagram of the effort versus reward of the work plan items.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kristine Keeney